

Mulching

Mulching is one of the best things you can do for your garden; and for anyone wondering what mulching is, it is the act of placing a protective barrier (mulch) around your plants and over your bare soil. This protective barrier can be made up of a variety of organic materials including bark or wood chips (from various tree species), pine needles, straw, and even cocoa bean shells. Some gardeners chose to use non-organic materials such as black plastic or landscaping fabric, however it is always best to chose the most organic option available in order to maintain the integrity of your garden. If the idea of decomposing organic material isn't your top pick, consider using natural alternatives such as river rock.

Advantages of mulching:

1. Weed Control

Through the use of mulch you can limit the amount of weeds that tend to spring up in the open spaces of your garden, because the mulch acts as a barrier, limiting the amount of sunlight that can find its way to the weeds.

2. Retain Moisture

Retaining moisture, especially during hot, dry seasons can not only help out your plants, but it can also help out your water bill.

Prevents soil erosion- Mulching not only keeps existing water trapped in the soil but it also keeps rain water from washing away your soil. It does this by breaking the fall of the water and therefore lessening the force when the water impacts the ground.

3. Maintains Soil Nutrients

Not only does mulch keep soil nutrients from being washed away with the rain, but it also can release nutrients into the soil if you are using an organic material. This happens as the organic material slowly decomposes on top of the soil.

4. Pest Control

Using certain types of mulch, such as cedar bark, can deter certain pests due to the fact that the cedar bark has natural oils that act as insect repellent. To reap the full benefits of this, be sure to find a mulch that is very fragrant, as it will have the greatest affect on insects. But be warned, some mulches can encourage insects to flock to your garden and sometimes your house, so be sure to research which type of mulch will best suit your needs.

5. Encourage Earthworms to Move It

Using organic material for mulching can encourage earthworms to occupy your garden soil. And as any good gardener will tell you, earthworms help improve soil structure and nutrient cycling.

6. Easy Way to Polish up your Garden

Mulch can give a garden a finished look by filling in the empty spaces while being one of the easiest fillers to maintain. While grass and other fillers may take extensive care, such as mowing and watering, as well as competing for resources with your garden plants, mulch is easy to care for and never competes with your other plants.